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ABSTRACT

In order to assess the effect of T-Group sensitivity training on teacher attitudes, 25 elementary and secondary school teachers were given the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory (MTAI) both before and after a 10-week T-Group program. A control group of 16 teachers taking an inservice course in Iroquois Indian History was used. Results showed that the control group's test scores remained the same or decreased slightly, while the experimental group's scores increased five to 20 percentile points. The greatest increase was shown by secondary school teachers of academic subjects. It may possibly be inferred that the T-Group training caused the increase in scores, but further research must be done to determine whether this training causes any actual changes in the teacher's classroom behavior. One approach would be pre- and posttesting of student attitudes to the teacher undergoing T-Group sensitivity training. (Four pages of teacher comments on the T-Group experience are appended.) (RT)

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T-GROUP METHOD OF SENSITIVITY TRAINING:

ITS EFFECT ON TEACHER ATTITUDES

AS INDICATED ON THE

MINNESOTA TEACHER ATTITUDE INVENTORY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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Report of a Study of the
Three Village Central School District #1
Setauket, New York 11785

By
Daniel B. Sweeney
Director of Guidance

June 1969

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FOREWORD

Sensitivity training and a host of other group experiences have of late been enthusiastically received by educators as a tool for increasing self-understanding and affecting deep-seated attitudes beyond the reach of the more traditional educational techniques. The project reported herein was successful. It should be noted, however, that the leaders were well trained in the procedures employed. Counselors should cross the line which distinguishes group counseling and similar group techniques from group guidance and instruction with caution, and only after verifying this skill with recognized authorities.

This study was undertaken and reported by Daniel B. Sweeney, Director of Guidance, Three Village Central School District.

The T-Group method of sensitivity training has become a popular management training device. Such organizations as the National Training Laboratory (N.T.L.) and the Western Training Laboratories have been conducting programs for business managers and executives since the late nineteen forties.[1] Many colleges and universities have included T-Groups as part of the curriculum in business education, public administration, education, and psychology.

"The T-Group is formed for individual learning purposes where the data are created and analyzed by group work and not fed in from the outside and interpreted by a teacher, where learning is a group task entered into jointly, where the trainer does not deny the group the experience of creating and maintaining their own group even though this experience will be difficult and may produce anxiety. Out of this experience are realized the two major goals of the T-Group, -- learning how to learn and learning how to become more effective in giving and receiving help. The process of developing the learning group and of acquiring membership skills provides the raw data from which to achieve these goals."[2] Discussions taking place in the T-Group concern the "feeling level," are the here and now aspect of individual and group existence, a theory based on observations by the N.T.L. to enhance one's self-insight and ability to communicate with others. An individual's ability to communicate with others is based primarily on his awareness of his emotions and the emotions of others.

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1. National Training Laboratories, 21st Annual Summer Laboratories, Washington, D.C. 1967.
2. Ibid. p. 12

Problems arise, not because emotions are present, but because they are ill-used. People get into trouble not because they have emotions, (emotions are healthy) but because of mistaken attempts to repress, distort, or disguise their true emotions.[3]

Many times, people refuse to question their "conceptual system of existence" which has served them in the past, for fear of insecurity or losing face. This is unhealthy as the individual is forced to increase his defenses to prove to himself that the outside world cannot force him to change.

In the T-Group, a miniature society is formed in which trust is built up among the members allowing each individual, and the group as a whole, to experience new conceptual relationships without fear of misinterpretations.

Campbell and Dunnette (1968) outlined the most common objectives of the practitioners of the T-Group method:

1. Increased self-insight or self-awareness concerning one's own behavior and its meaning in a social context.
2. Increased sensitivity to the behavior of others.
3. Increased awareness and understanding of the types of processes that facilitate or inhibit group functioning and the interactions between different groups.
4. Heightened diagnostic skill in social, interpersonal, and intergroup situations.

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3. Ibid p. 15

5. Increased action skill. This refers to a person's ability to intervene successfully in inter- or intragroup situations to increase member satisfactions, effectiveness, or output.
6. Learning how to learn. This refers to an individual's ability to analyze continually his own interpersonal behavior for the purpose of helping himself and others achieve more effective and satisfying interpersonal relationships.[4]

A review of the current educational literature reveals a lack of research on the T-Group method of sensitivity training application in elementary and secondary education.

Counselors in the Village Central School District, Setauket, who had experience with T-Groups, volunteered to work with teachers in the inservice program. This study was undertaken to provide some evaluative measure of T-Group experiences for teachers in an inservice program. The program goals indicate a somewhat different emphasis than those summarized by Campbell and Dunnette, emphasizing the individual objectives of fostering self-awareness and sensitivity. Consequently, the five factors seen as important broad objectives of the human relations laboratories (National Training Laboratories), were more appropriate:

1. Self-insight
2. Better unders anding of other persons and awareness of one's impact on them.

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4. J.D. Campbell and M.D. Dunnette, Effectiveness of T-Group Experience in Managerial Training and Development, Psychological Bulletin, Vol. 70, August 1968, p. 73-104.

3. Better understanding of group processes and increased skill in achieving group effectiveness.
4. Increased recognition of the characteristics of larger social systems.
5. Greater awareness of the dynamics of change.[5]

PROCEDURES

In an attempt to measure teacher attitude change before and after a T-Group sensitivity training experience the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory was selected. This inventory was designed to measure those attitudes of a teacher which predict how well he will get along with pupils in interpersonal relationships, and indirectly, how well satisfied he will be with teaching as a vocation. The attitudes of a teacher are the result of the interaction of a multitude of factors including academic and social intelligence, general knowledge and abilities, social skills, personality traits, energy, value, and teaching techniques. It can be assumed, therefore, that attitudes afford a key to the prediction of the type of social atmosphere a teacher will maintain in the classroom. Teacher-pupil attitudes are simply indicators of the teacher's classroom behavior and the mere introduction of better attitudes by instruction may not produce any change in behavior.[6]

The subjects in this study are 25 teachers in the Three Village Central School District, Setauket, New York, who had signed up for a two

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5. National Training Laboratories, 1967, p. 2
6. The Psychological Corporation, MTAI Manual, p. 3-4

credit inservice course entitled "Human Relations," briefly described as an experience in T-Group sensitivity training. Fourteen are secondary school academic subject teachers with 5 years or more training, six are elementary school teachers with 4 or more years of training in a system which includes more than 21 teachers, and five are secondary teachers of nonacademic areas with 5 years or more of training. Most of the teachers were aware of the nature of the course from discussions with previous participants (the course was offered last year to 23 teachers in the district in the inservice program). It is safe to assume that most of this year's participants selected the program with a fair idea of what to expect and with a genuine desire to improve their teaching performance.

The control group was made up of 16 teachers from the same district enrolled in an inservice course in Iroquois Indian History. Eight of these teachers are secondary academic teachers, seven are elementary teachers, and one is a nonacademic secondary school teacher. Both courses were offered during the fall semester.

The 25 teachers in the Human Relations course were divided in a random fashion into two groups, one of 13 and the other of 12 members. Each group was to meet weekly for 10 weeks for 2-hour sessions with two counselors from the Three Village guidance staff. The course was concluded with a 12-hour marathon for each group. All four counselors had had extensive T-Group sensitivity training experience for over a year on a weekly basis, as well as marathon experiences.

During the first meeting, participants in the inservice courses in Human Relations, and in Iroquois Indian History were administered the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory. The procedure was repeated at the

conclusion of the inservice program. The results of the initial test and the posttest for both programs were then compared. The teachers who participated in the T-Group sensitivity training program were also requested to relate their feelings regarding their experience in anecdotal comments. Certain of these comments are included at the end of the report and provide a very important evaluative function since they reveal, from the participant's own view, what he gained from the experience.

RESULTS

From a comparison of the pretest and posttest for the experimental group certain inferences may be made. The relatively high (76.1) mean percentile rank for the elementary teachers and the (68.0) mean percentile rank for the nonacademic group may be due to several factors. The teachers attracted to the inservice course in T-Group sensitivity training knew something about the course from last year's participants. Further, they were interested in a course which might help them become better teachers. The majority enrolled in the inservice course already possessed attitudes sought in the M.T.A.I. The nonacademic group included three School Nurse Teachers, a category not tested in establishing the M.T.A.I. norms. The increase in these two groups (elementary teachers and nonacademic secondary teachers), in terms of their mean percentile ranks, is not as interesting as the increase in the secondary academic group. (Pretest mean percentile rank 44.1 -- Posttest rank 64.0.)

The control group's comparison pretest and posttest indicates a narrow decrease in the elementary teachers (pretest 44.3 -- posttest 43.0) mean percentile ranks. The lone nonacademic teacher repeated his score on both tests. The secondary academic group went down from a mean percentile rank of 40.0 to 37.8.

In comparing the experimental group results with the control group, it may be inferred that, as a result of the T-Group sensitivity training experience, the mean percentile ranks for all three groups (elementary, secondary, and nonacademic) increased. In terms of the secondary academic, the increase was quite substantial.

That the T-Group sensitivity training experience produced the marked increase in the mean percentile of the academic group can only be cautiously inferred until a more detailed statistical analysis is completed. However, the inservice course in T-Group sensitivity training enabled the participants to have an emotional experience, as evidenced by the anecdotal comments. These may be potentially more significant than the pretesting and posttesting with an attitude inventory. The study focus was on teacher attitudes. What is needed, among many other possible approaches, is a focus on pupil perception of the teacher prior to T-Group sensitivity training and then after the experience. It may be that the learning which the teacher experiences, the insight, the awareness, etc., may not always be brought out from the group experience to the classroom. This carry over should be the major goal of any sensitivity training for educators. There is also some indication that mixing elementary teachers with secondary school teachers in T-Group experiences is beneficial.

In this district, for example, the elementary teachers began with (as indicated by the M.T.A.I.) a much higher degree of satisfaction from interprofessional relationships than their counterparts in secondary school. The significant increase in the secondary academic teachers performance on the M.T.A.I., although dramatic, is only one important aspect of the study.

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

N = 25 (total) Pretest — Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory Form A

	Elementary Teachers	Secondary Teachers	
	4 Years Training	Academic 5 Years Training	Nonacademic 5 Years Training
N	6	14	5
Mean Percentile Rank	76.1	44.1	68.0

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

N = 25 (total) Posttest

	Elementary Teachers	Secondary Teachers	
	4 Years Training	Academic 5 Years Training	Nonacademic 5 Years Training
N	6	14	5
Mean Percentile Rank	80.1	64.0	73.7

CONTROL GROUP

N = 16 (total) Pretest

	Elementary Teachers	Secondary Teachers	
	4 years Training	Academic 5 Years Training	Nonacademic 5 Years Training
N	7	8	1
Mean Percentile Rank	44.3	40.0	60.0

CONTROL GROUP

N = 16 (total) Posttest

	Elementary Teachers	Secondary Teachers	
	4 Years Training	Academic 5 Years Training	Non academic 5 Years Training
N	7	8	1
Mean Percentile Rank	43.0	37.8	60 .0

TEACHER COMMENTS

1. My experiences during this course were, in many ways, the most meaningful I have ever had in my life. To get so deeply involved and to care so much for a group of people who only weeks before had been strangers, is truly a tremendous thing. I discovered strengths and weaknesses in myself that I had long hidden, mirrored and even magnified in others. The feeling of acceptance and freedom obtained in this course will not soon be forgotten.

When you discover that others have faults and fears much like your own, you develop a certain confidence in your ability to get along in this world. This confidence can only help to make you better in a profession where you are "on stage" at all times. Now that I can face and accept some of my shortcomings, I know I'll better be able to accept shortcomings in my students and colleagues.

2. I believe the course has been beneficial because I have been able to talk about the problems that have been affecting me and hear the group's reaction. The group has forced me to think of different solutions to these problems. However, nothing has been imposed upon me. Just alternatives to think of.

I also believe that I am a little more sensitive to other people and their needs. At least, I wish to believe I am. I hope I am.

3. From the beginning of the course I began to realize that communication of this type was far more difficult than I had anticipated -- it required courage to speak out, people are inhibited, etc. Somehow,

though, it seemed very worthwhile once I had overcome the shock of giving up part of myself.

The main value of the course is to achieve a deeper awareness of the feelings of others and oneself. In order to benefit in any way, it was essential to participate through listening or speaking -- both are skills which have to be developed.

4. Although I enjoyed and profited from the sessions, they made me very anxious and ill-at-ease. On many occasions, I had wanted to contribute more, but was fearful that what I had to say would not "come out right." I think this was because I did not feel comfortable with several members of the group. I didn't feel that they would be sympathetic, or even accept what I had to say. I think I am more aware of people's feelings and also very conscious of how aware others are of my feelings.

5. I think the real value of this course was in the re-learning of over-riding tensions, problems, and experience within us all. Participants felt a need to participate, and the mutual trust generated within and by the group, made even those reluctant at first, able to come forth.

I personally think it made us all aware of our facilities as human beings and more sensitive to the needs of others.

6. Initial Impression: Similar experience as the student's "speak out" where individuals express opinions about certain issues important to them. School, teachers, etc.

During class sessions: Experienced a deeper involvement -- which is beyond a superficial level -- people becoming more emotionally involved

-- and committing themselves to certain ideals and values. People began to open up and let down defenses.

Final Impression: Gained awareness to other people's "hang-ups," became more trusting -- group grew closer -- people were more willing to get involved and help other individuals.

7. Perhaps the occasional feelings of anxiety which were aroused in me could be called negative results. On the positive side, there was greater awareness of feelings -- my own and others, hopefully more sensitivity to others' feelings, and positive sharing of previously unexpressed feelings carried over to the home situation.

8. Prior to entering the group I had been very concerned about the ability of people to communicate in general, and specifically I was concerned about my own ability to be sensitive toward others.

After the first few meetings I began to feel disappointed. I felt that the people involved were not really exerting or extending themselves. This frustrated me. Apparently I had counted on the group a great deal and when it was not living up to my expectations I started to try and direct the situations a little to try and cause what <u>I thought should happen</u> to happen.

The marathon session was the fulfillment of my expectations. People really began to relate and I felt a great sense of relief. People shifted from aggressive types of reactions to some real attempts at understanding. There was a real feeling of humanness.

9. I was very apprehensive during the early sessions, hoping and

fearing that the group would "get to" me. When it did, I was very frightened and lost most of the composure with which I usually view others. Following that, I began to look forward to the meetings with pleasure. I found the group very supportive and it gave me the courage to say things openly that I normally kept to myself. I felt that I was in really close touch with others and enjoyed the experience.

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